

# **Strategies for Surveyor Success with Resident Interviews**

Interviewing helps residents fulfill their choices over aspects of their lives and serves as a valuable tool for surveyors to identify potential areas of concern related to resident rights, quality of care and life, and more. This document contains strategies to enhance resident understanding and resident participation in the interview process and has been developed with input from surveyors around the country who report success with the QIS Resident Interviews.

## **Making an Initial Contact**

- Introduce yourself to the resident and explain the purpose of your visit
- Screen the Census Sample resident to assess the interview status listed on the Census Sample report
- Determine if the resident requires an interpreter
- Show genuine interest in the resident's responses
- Sample language to use:
  - "During the first two days of our visit to the facility, my colleagues and I will be meeting with several residents to ask some questions to find out what it is like to live in this facility. I would like to meet with you if you would be willing to do so; would that be okay?"
- If the resident is willing to be interviewed and is available immediately proceed with the interview
- If the resident is **not** able to be interviewed immediately you should schedule a time and location to meet with the resident and complete the interview
- Use good time management when scheduling your resident interviews to allow for the opportunity to complete all of your Stage 1 activities
- Make the resident aware the interview will take about 20 minutes

## **Beginning the Interview**

- Re-introduce yourself
- Explain the reason for your visit to the resident, if necessary
- Respect the resident's privacy by seeking a quiet / private area to talk  
Make sure he/she is comfortable & that you can establish eye-contact (e.g., sit down to conduct the interview after asking permission)

## **Establishing Rapport and Respect**

- Offer the resident the opportunity to ask questions
- Show the resident the laptop or tablet so they can see what you are doing
- Explain that you have several questions that require a yes or no response
- Ensure they understand their privacy will be protected
- Engage the resident in general conversation to help establish rapport

## **Nonverbal Communication**

- Nonverbal communication sends a powerful message about your level of interest in what the resident has to say (e.g., don't act disinterested in what the resident is saying, don't act bothered by computer issues or distracted with computer issues)
- Take your time; do not rush
- Maintain eye contact with the resident

### **Maintaining the Intent of the Question**

CMS recognizes that every surveyor applies his or her unique assessment skills, including those related to interviews. During the survey process it is critical that the intent of the interview questions be maintained. Some residents, especially those speaking English as a second language, with cognitive deficits or with strong regional dialects, may require the question be rephrased. Some questions have additional guidance to help clarify a question during an interview. If an interpreter is used during resident interviews, it is important that he or she understand to maintain the intent of the questions. (e.g., if a question cannot be translated verbatim)

- Break the question apart for easier understanding if the resident requests clarification or seems hesitant to answer
- CMS recognizes it may be difficult to obtain a yes or no response from the resident.
- Vague responses such as “maybe”, “sometimes” or “not all the time”, “most of the time” should be recorded as a negative response along with pertinent Relevant Findings

*(CMS has provided guidance regarding rephrasing questions and probing for more information in the document titled QIS Resident Interview Guidance.)*

### **Keeping Focused**

- If the resident begins to discuss information outside of the structured interview questions, be sure to:
  - acknowledge the concern
  - make notes, as appropriate, in Relevant Findings
  - try to redirect the conversation to the prior sequence of interview questions
- It is also possible that the resident’s discussion regarding one question may provide an answer to a question yet to come

*Consider the following example: a resident replied positively to the question “Can you have visitors anytime during the day or night?” by saying that visitors are always welcome. The resident then proceeded to describe that although her family is always welcome that there is nowhere in the facility to visit without being overheard. This second bit of information answers a question appearing much later in the interview. In such a case, it would be appropriate to move out of sequence to the question “If you would have a visitor, do you have a private place to meet?” which appears several sections later in the interview. Using echoing techniques, the negative response to the question could be confirmed and then any pertinent additional information would be documented in Relevant Findings. After addressing this issue, the interviewer would return back to where he or she left off when the resident directed the conversation to the later question. In other words, the surveyor has flexibility to address questions out of order if the resident is directing this through conversation.*

- If a resident interview is interrupted and it is not possible to complete it prior to the end of Stage 1 the responses entered during the partial interview should be retained.  
(see the note section at checklist Step #27)

### **Documenting the Results**

- Document responses to all questions directly into ASE-Q without disrupting the ongoing interview with the resident  
Document Relevant Findings for all negative responses to ensure accuracy by including the date, time source of information  
(Record the resident’s response not your interpretation of their response)
- Record the resident’s response even if it is inconsistent with information gathered from another data source

**Closing the Interview**

- At the end of formal interview let the resident know that you and the team will be on-site for several more days and are available should they want to follow up with you
- Share with the resident that as part of information gathering over the next several days that you may be back to talk with them further
- Explain to the resident, that with their permission, you will be following up with the facility regarding any concerns voiced during the interview
- Thank the resident for taking the time with you and validate the importance of the information that they have provided